

No. 16 Ohio State football escapes with 29-15 win against UAB Blazers

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By: Pat Brennan

COLUMBUS - During its game against Ohio State, the University of Alabama-Birmingham Blazers gave Buckeye Nation a prolonged scare.

Unranked and winless, UAB (0-3) took a 9-0 lead against No. 16 OSU and held that margin during the second quarter. The Buckeyes (4-0) finally found their footing and took a 21-12 lead into half before escaping by a seemingly comfortable 29-15 margin.

OSU sophomore quarterback Braxton Miller helped erase UAB's advantage with a 12-yard touchdown run to give the Buckeyes a lead they wouldn't let go of. Miller finished the game with 12-of-20 passing for 143 yards to go along with his 64 rushing yards on 11 carries.

Defensively, OSU sophomore cornerback Doran Grant collected a late-second half fumble to set senior fullback Zach Boren up for another score. Grant finished the game with seven tackles, an interception and a sack.

UAB sophomore kicker Ty Long played a starring role for the Blazers as he converted 3-of-4 field goal attempts in the game and helped make good on an onside kick attempt as well. A 34-yard field goal in the fourth quarter brought the Blazers to within a score at 21-15.

Long's contributions were made more useful by the fact that his team lacked was unable to score an offensive touchdown in the game. However, Long missed a 47-yard attempt later in the quarter that would have helped bring his team to within three and UAB wouldn't come closer than that.

Miller added a second touchdown and a two-point conversion — his seventh and second of the season, respectively — late in regulation to put a cap on OSU's victory.

In his second game back from injury, OSU senior running back Jordan Hall tallied 105 yards on the ground on 17 carries. Junior receiver Corey Brown was the team's leading receiver with 67 yards on four receptions.

Long before OSU had established its air and ground attack, UAB had silenced Ohio Stadium by blocking senior punter Ben Buchanan's first punt attempt of the game.

In fact, UAB opened the scoring on the blocked punt. Blazers senior receiver Nick Adams recovered and returned the ball 20 yards to the south end zone to put his side up, 6-0. The ensuing extra-point attempt was blocked by OSU senior safety Orhian Johnson.

Through the 10:47 mark of the second quarter, the UAB had outgained OSU, 147-42, and collected eight first downs to the Buckeyes' two. They also out-possessed OSU, holding the ball for 12:55 compared to 6:38 for the hosts.

By that moment in the second period, the Blazers had also made it a two-possession game.

Long cracked a 47-yard field goal try through the uprights to cap 10-play Blazers drive and make the score 9-0.

OSU finally broke through on its next drive. Redshirt sophomore running back Rod Smith carried the ball one yard to put the Buckeyes on the scoreboard. The OSU offense covered 75 yards on 10 plays in what could only be considered its first substantive drive of the game.

The teams swapped scoring drives for the rest of the half.

UAB wasn't going anywhere, though — Long made sure of that as he socked a 54-yard field goal in try to extend the Blazers' lead to 12-7.

As in all contests against opponents perceived to be weaker than OSU, fans waited for Miller to make his mark on the game, and that moment came late in the first half.

Miller ran, juked and spun his way into the south end zone on a 12-yard touchdown run — his sixth of the season — to give the Buckeyes their

first lead of the game at 14-12.

OSU sophomore cornerback Doran Grant recovered a UAB fumble on the visitors' 32-yard line to set up the next score, a 2-yard touchdown run by senior fullback Zach Boren.

Boren's score helped send the Buckeyes into half with a 21-12 lead.

Total yardage was in favor of OSU by the half as well, to the tune of 224-188. Miller finished the half 7-of-11 passing for 88 yards to go along with his 45 rushing yards on three carries.

UAB tried to fight its way back into the game when it successfully converted on onside kick at the outset of the second half. The OSU defense sent the Blazers' offense packing on the ensuing drive.

The Blazers added 107 yards of total offense in the third quarter and still winning the time-of-possession battle. Neither team scored in the quarter, though.

UAB entered the red zone early in the fourth quarter, but the OSU defense continued to hold back the Blazers. The visitors were restricted to a third field goal attempt by Long, which the kicked converted from 34 yards.

The Blazers gained little on offense, but OSU gained less — the Buckeyes were helped off the field after an unsuccessful third-down attempt in the fourth quarter by "boos" from some of 105,019 in attendance.

Miller's touchdown run later in the quarter was enough to relieve any doubt of victory and fans began to head for the exits.

Grant collected his interception on UAB's ensuing possession.

OSU returns to Ohio Stadium Oct. 6 for a Big Ten contest against Nebraska. The game has been designated a "Scarlet-out the 'Shoe" game and fans are encouraged to wear scarlet.